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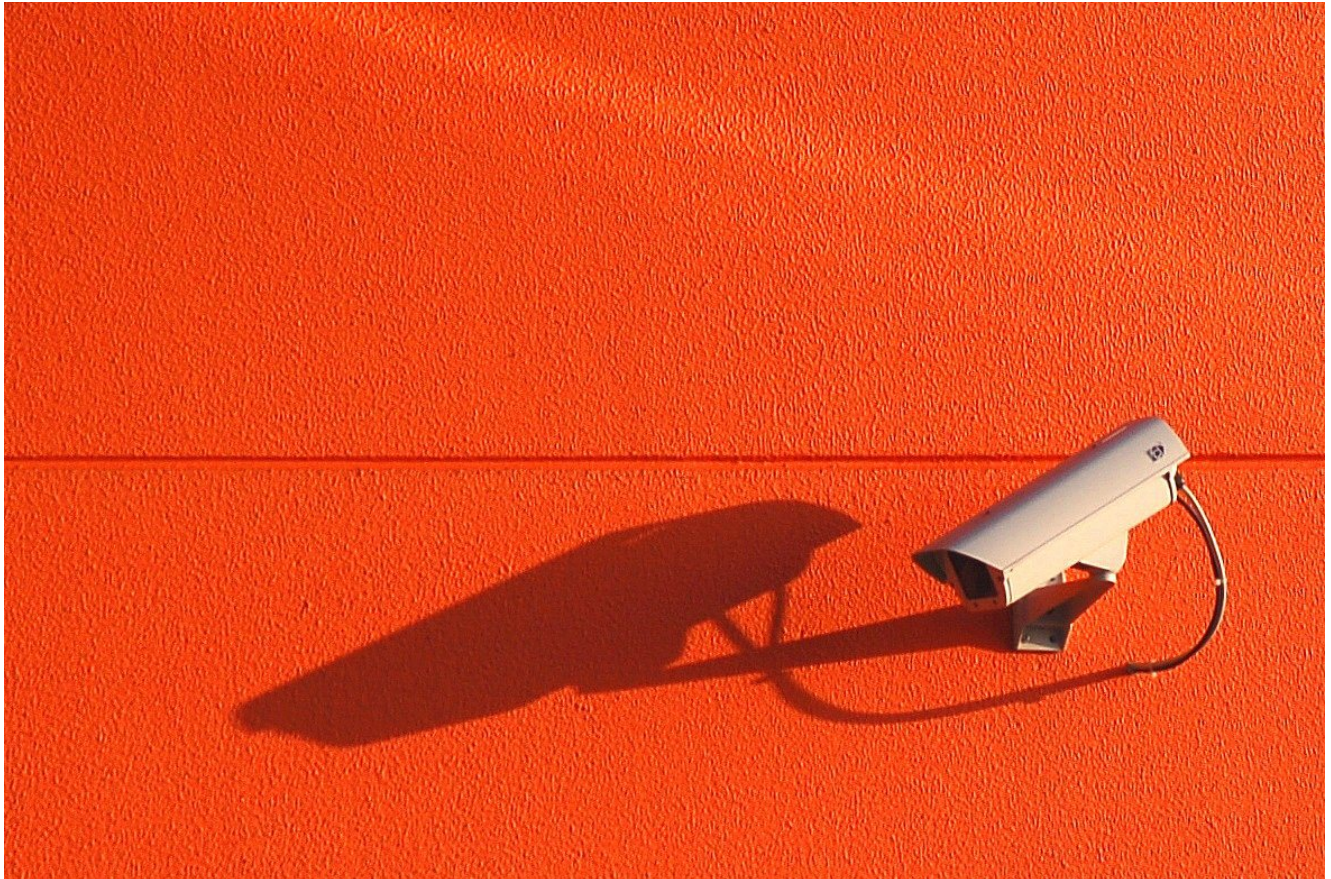
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Marc Schuilenburg

Security Crack-Ups

A couple of years ago, on a rainy Sunday afternoon, I went to a [Sparta Rotterdam](#) football game. Never before had I felt so conscious of the security regimes that permeated my movement across the city. After that memorable day, which I'll

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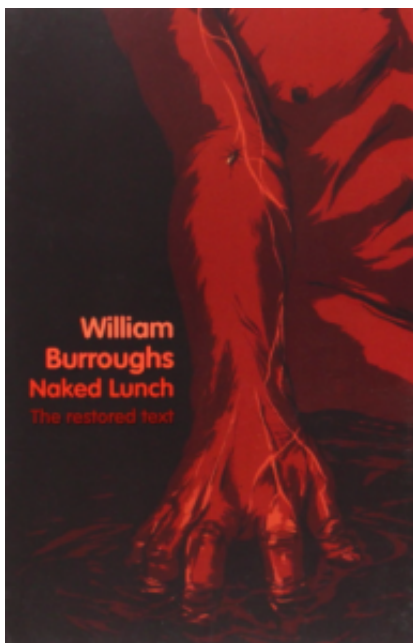
Bookshop of the Month: October

Marc Schuilenburg

moment, I decided to write a book about the securitization of our society. [Scott Fitzgerald](#) wrote in *The Crack-Up* (1945) that tiny breaks, imperceptible cracks, in a person's self are of much more significance than major events. These "molecular" changes, he wrote, are "the sort of blow that comes from within – that you don't feel until it's too late to do anything about it." The security regimes I encountered that day in my home city felt like a series of the same tiny, almost imperceptible, cracks that Fitzgerald talked about.

One of the first writers to pinpoint the rise of these security systems was neither a sociologist, nor a criminologist, nor any other kind of academic, but the American novelist [William Burroughs](#). In an interview with [Penthouse](#) (yes, Penthouse) in 1972 he elaborated on the concept of a control society: "The point is that now the means of control are much more efficient. We have computers. So the

opportunities to control are much more potent now than they have ever been.” And in his famous novel *Naked Lunch* (1959), Burroughs wrote, “The logical extension of encephalographic research is biocontrol: that is, control of physical movement, mental processes, emotional reactions and apparent sensory impressions by means of bioelectric signals injected into the nervous system of the subject.”



The Naked Lunch



The Crack-Up

So let me take you back to that fateful day, when I first felt inspired to write *The Securitization of Society*. I've supported the Dutch football club Sparta Rotterdam for many years – I'm a season ticket holder. Just as I was leaving for the Saturday game, my neighbour told me

that she was on the lookout for somebody who

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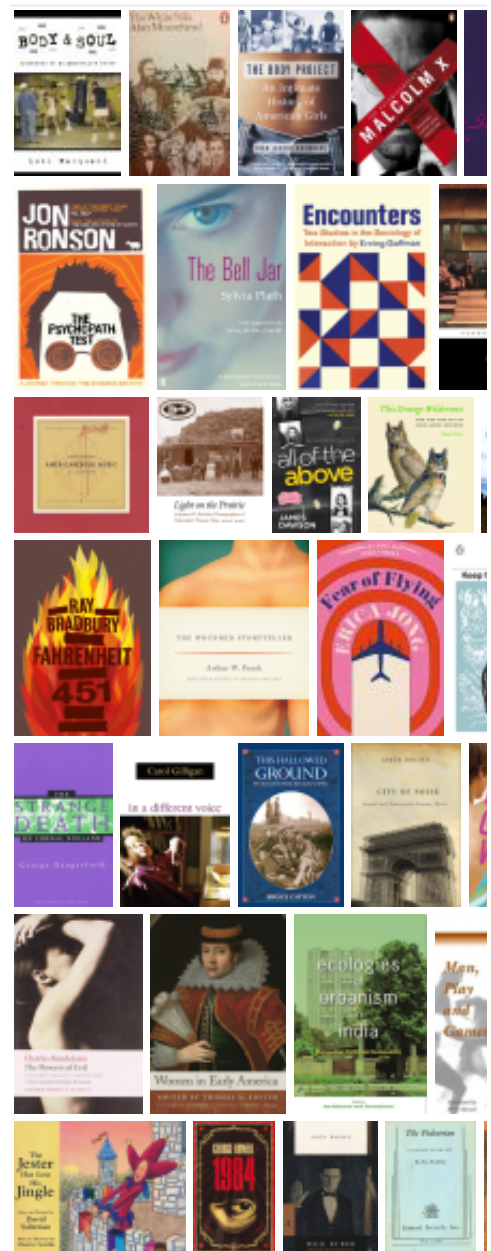
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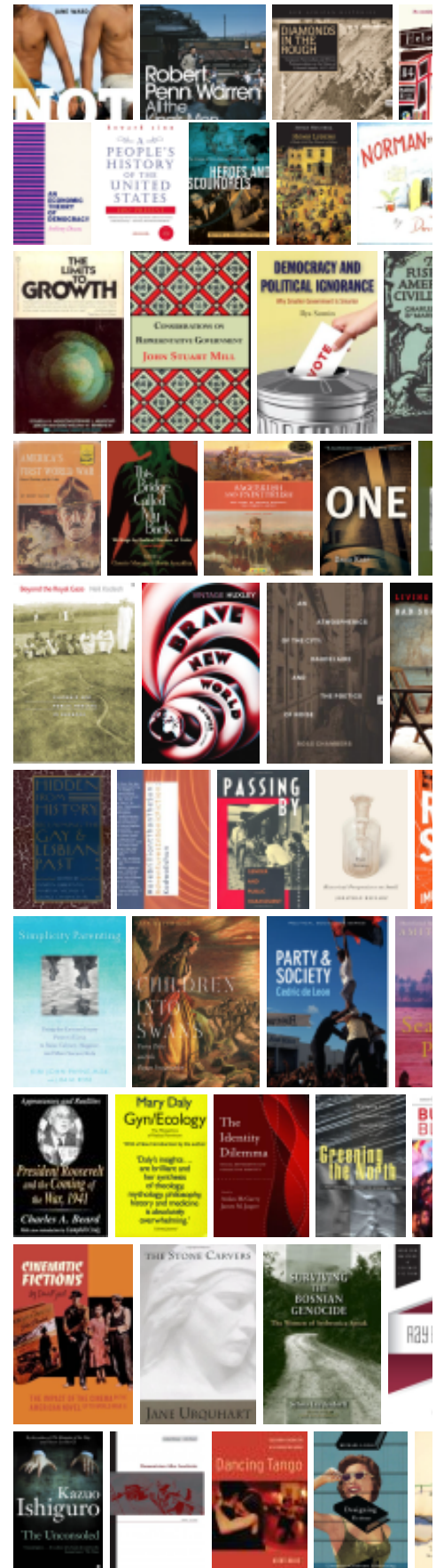
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looked just like me – a handsome, dark haired guy with a slightly overdue shave. She'd just got a message from Civilian Net, a digital platform used by the police to actively engage citizens in the fight against crime and disorder. Convincing her that I wasn't the burglar she was looking for wasn't too hard, but the incident played on my mind as I made my way to the game. I started noticing the number of cameras put up by the local government in my neighborhood. I'd just read an article about the implementation of facial recognition systems, and imagined the images of my face being processed by a databank and compared with the photos of thousands of criminals. Around half past one, I went into the local shop to grab something to eat during the game. A sticker in the window told me that this shop participated in the Collective Shop Ban project – misbehave here (steal a chocolate bar, for example) and I'd be banned from the hundreds of shops, banks, restaurants and cinemas participating in the project. As I descended into the subway, I entered another highly controlled zone. Rotterdam's subway system requires passengers use an electronic pass, preferably personalized (an anonymous one expires every year), which according to the promotion team is "easy, fast, and safe". The electronic gates keep fare dodgers out, and as fare dodgers are also considered to be more aggressive, this system is also said to promote other passengers' safety. All the passengers' movements are logged in a central database. Having finally arrived at the stadium, I used my



season ticket, also an electronic card, to enter via the automatic gates. Anyone committing an offence in the stadium can be barred, and stadium bans for up to a lifetime are one of the ways stewards try to keep order during the games.



More Brilliant than the Sun

By the time the game began, in less than half an hour I had crossed five totally different "control zones". Over the course of the next two years, I played that day over and over again in my mind. I needed to forge new concepts to analyse these shifts

in security and safety management. I created, for example, the concept 'security assemblage' to better understand the constellations of territories, rules, and authorities I encountered that day. [Kodwo Eshun](#), writer of one of my favorite books *More Brilliant than the Sun* (1998), explains the necessity of inventing new concepts beautifully: "I've stopped calling myself a writer, for the book I'm just going to call myself a concept engineer. What we're doing is engineering, is grasping fictions, grasping concepts, grasping hallucinations from our own area, translating them into another one, mixing them, and seeing where we go with them." In an extension of William Burroughs'



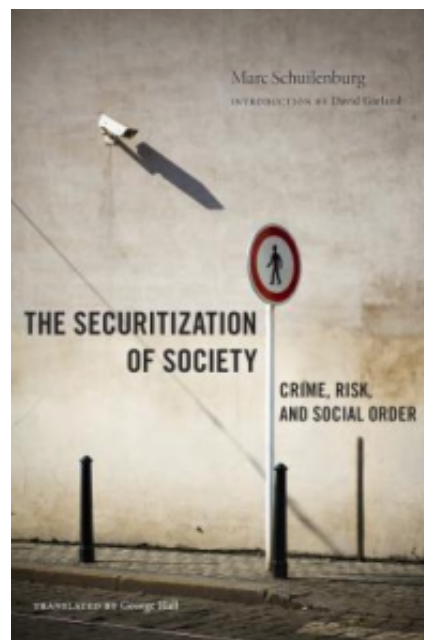
remarks, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze observed in his seminal short essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” (1992) that everyone’s lawful or unlawful position can be traced in a control society. All kinds of technologies, ranging from intelligent cameras to DNA banks, make it possible to follow and control people ceaselessly, regardless of whether they are at home or in public places such as streets and squares. As a result of this transformation, the fixed spaces of our modern society take on a new purpose: they become part of a continuous, smooth space, a control society whose purpose is to prevent any kind of harm. And the Sparta Rotterdam game? Well, Sparta lost for the third time in a row and were relegated to the second division. For me, that’s more than a ‘tiny’ crack-up.



Keywords...



Marc Schuilenburg is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology, at the VU University Amsterdam. His latest book is *The Securitization of Society* (New York University Press), which publishes in July 2015.



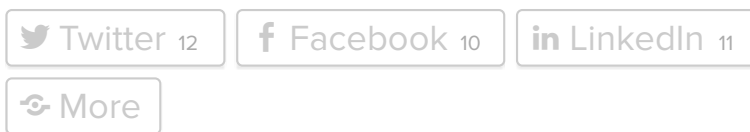
The Securitization of Society

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